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ABSTRACT

This module is part of a set of management and supervisor training (MAST) materials developed by the Department of Energy for the Waste Isolation Division. Its stated purpose is to enable trainees to deal with employees fairly and effectively. The first section of the module is an introduction that includes a terminal objective and opening remarks intended to focus the trainees' attention on the subjects discussed in the module. Most other module sections begin with a list of enabling objectives. Many sections contain "critical incidents" or real-life occurrences at the Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant that relate to the section topic. Some illustrate effective management practices, and some illustrate ineffective ones. Each critical incident includes "lessons learned" information. Section topics include the following: promoting professionalism; influencing employee behavior; motivating employees; counseling employees; addressing employee concerns; conducting performance appraisals; interviewing; directing employees; and managing exempt and nonexempt personnel. Contains 19 references and a practice test. Answers and feedback for the test are provided. (YLB)

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ED 395 156

Waste Isolation Division
Management and Supervisor Training (MAST) Program

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS MAS-110

This module was prepared by:

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TRAINEE INFORMATION

Trainee Name:_____

Trainee SS#:_____

Date Module Started:_____

Last Possible Date
For Completion of
Module Examination:_____

CE 071 579

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A. INTRODUCTION

Terminal Objective

Upon completion of this module, the trainee will be able to deal with employees fairly and effectively.

Mastery of the terminal objective will be demonstrated by scoring 80 percent or higher on the module examination.

As a supervisor or manager, you have a significant impact on employee relations. Your actions affect employee morale, turnover, and productivity. This module is designed to give you information useful for managing the employee relations climate in your area of responsibility. Refer to it whenever you foresee especially challenging employee relations situations.

B. PROMOTING PROFESSIONALISM

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify practices that promote professionalism among employees.

2. Identify practices that may encourage unprofessional behavior among employees.

3. Given a scenario, evaluate the manager's effectiveness in promoting professionalism among employees.

Professionalism means conformance to high standards. When you promote professionalism, you encourage your employees to apply the highest ethical, legal, and technical standards to everything they do.

You can promote professionalism among your employees through the following practices:

- Act as a role model

  You influence the behavior of your employees by the example you set. This happens through identification processes - we watch others and learn from them. People are more likely to imitate the behavior of models who are high in prestige or expertise. As a supervisor, you serve as a powerful role model for your employees; they <u>will</u> imitate your behavior. Therefore, you must think about the example you will set before you act. Don't expect your employees to "Do as I say, not as I do". They won't!

- Encourage cooperation

  It goes without saying that cooperation among your employees is essential. But interdepartmental cooperation at Waste Isolation Division is just as important. We need to work together to accomplish our mission and achieve our vision.

- Build morale by accentuating the positive rather than the negative

Recognize and reinforce when employees do the right thing.

- Show pride in your work group
- Show faith in your employees by delegating
- Share departmental goals with your employees

Reinforce self-starters who initiate efforts to reach the goals.

- Treat each person as an individual - but with fairness

Work on knowing and understanding your employees.

- Inspire confidence

You can do this by setting a consistently professional example. Your employees will come to have faith in you.

- Control yourself in stressful situations
- Be well-organized

Plan and coordinate your activities and projects.

- Keep an open mind

Be receptive; don't judge until you have heard the complete message.

- Be patient

Work on your ability to respond to problems calmly and without complaint.

- Be sincere

Set an example of genuineness for your employees.

- Be loyal

Speak up before decisions are made; support decisions after they are made.

- Treat employees with respect

Showing high regard for others encourages them to try to maintain your respect.

- Prepare reports and records with care and honesty
- Properly protect DOE/WIPP property

Practices That May Encourage Unprofessional Behavior

- Dressing unprofessionally
- Using foul or obscene language
- Engaging in political activities at work
- Using inappropriate physical contact
- Failing to conform to proper etiquette
- Acting discourteousley
- Pushing your moral beliefs on others
- Attempting to convert others to your church or faith
- Engaging in horseplay (rough or boisterous play)
- Knowingly violating procedures or regulations
- "Winking" at unprofessional, unethical, or illegal behavior

Use the principles covered in this section to promote professionalism within your work group. You will see the positive results in your employees' conduct.

CRITICAL INCIDENT
INEFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Occurrence: A manager was consistently rude and discourteous to personnel in other departments. Words like "crude" and "obnoxious" were used to describe the manager's behavior. One particular incident will help to illustrate. During a meeting where serious issues were being discussed, a point of disagreement arose. The manager became very emotional and began to swear in front of employees.

Impact: The employees in the manager's department came to believe that this type of behavior was acceptable. This caused problems between this work group and other work groups. Much time was wasted and lasting ill feelings were created.

Lessons learned: 1) Your employees will mimic your behavior; be careful how you behave. 2) Acting professionally is not optional; it is part of the job for WID supervisors and managers.

C. INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify good practices to follow in influencing employee behavior.
2. Identify practices to avoid in influencing employee behavior.
3. Given a scenario, evaluate the manager's effectiveness in influencing employee behavior.

Influence is power exerted over the minds or behavior of others. Influence strategies are the action components of power. They are the actual behaviors that people use to get their ways in organizations.

All influencing behavior can be classified into the following seven broad categories:

1. Reason

   This is the strategy used most frequently by successful managers. Data and facts are developed and then used to influence employees. The reasons must make sense to the employee you are attempting to influence. Most employees will want to know what is in it for them and for the organization. Example: "Bob, the studies in this report show that your department could save a lot of time and money by implementing the new procedure. What is your opinion?"

2. Friendliness

   Employees are normally more willing to cooperate with a friendly person. To properly use friendliness as a strategy you must be consistent and sincere. Nothing will put an employee on guard faster than an obviously false display of friendship that is out of character. Example: "I thought you did a nice job on that budget presentation, Lisa. I need you to take a look at this planned presentation and help me improve it."

3. Coalition

A coalition is a temporary alliance of distinct employees for joint action. This strategy consists of developing support networks within an organization. Example: "Bob, this proposal will have a negative impact on your department, too. I want your help in writing an alternative proposal." Building a coalition requires skill in developing alliances. If poorly implemented, it will look like petty office politics.

4. Bargaining

This influence strategy is based on your negotiating skills. You use exchanges to gain influence, and this leads to cooperation. Successful exchanges require that you determine what the employee's interests are, assess your resources, and find something you can give that will be valuable enough to produce what you want from the employee. Example: "Bill, if you expedite that equipment I need, I'll speed up completion of that prototype you asked for."

5. Assertiveness

This strategy is based on your force of character. It is implemented by stating what you want positively and, if necessary, forcefully. Example: "I understand that you are busy, but next week is not soon enough. I have to have to have this information this week."

6. Appeal to higher authority

This is based on the chain-of-command concept. When using this strategy, you call upon someone in a higher position than yourself for help. Example: Approaching your manager you say, "I can't seem to get their cooperation. Can you talk with the department manager about it?"

7. Sanctions

This is the use of coercive intervention or punishment to influence others. This is the least often used strategy for successful managers. Example: "Sheila, if you don't complete that objective, it's going to affect your performance rating." The use of sanctions is not recommended (other than justified disciplinary actions).

We have now discussed your seven strategy options. Now, how can you use these to influence employees? Here are the steps you should follow:

1. Assume the employee whose cooperation you need is a potential ally

   This will get you in a positive frame of mind and enhance your ability to succeed.

2. Clarify your goals and priorities

   Prepare so that you can make clear requests that state exactly what you want, from whom, by when.

3. Diagnose your potential ally's (the employee's) goals, concerns, and needs

   Consider the employee's environment, worries, and personal background. Even though you are very busy with other tasks this can be time well spent. The better your diagnosis, the better your chances of success.

4. Assess your resources relative to the ally's desires

   Think about what sources of supply or support are available to you.

5. Diagnose your relationship with the ally

   What is the state of affairs between you and the employee and between your respective departments?

6. Choose and implement an influence strategy

7. Assess your strategy choice for effectiveness

   If you meet resistance, go back to step three (rediagnose).

Influence Practices to Avoid

- Over relying on one or two strategies

  By doing so, you are a captive of your inflexibility. Taking the time to diagnose the employee and the situation will help you choose the right strategy. Vary your strategies to fit the circumstances.

- Overlooking the power of commitment

  Sometimes clarifying an overall commitment or vision and enlisting employees in support of that is very effective.

- Forgetting to help your employees to be effective influencers - even of you

  This will free you to spend more of your time seeking new opportunities and improving your operation.

- Excessively diagnosing (trying to be an amateur psychoanalyst)

  Don't get too wrapped up in determining employees' underlying motivations.

- Being too concerned about being well liked

  This may cause you to be unsuccessful or to overuse the Friendliness Strategy.

- Rarely using any influencing strategies (bystanding)

  Bystanders tend to sit back and let events take their own course. Obviously, these individuals are not good managers.

- Using a "shotgun" approach

  This is when someone strikes out blindly without taking adequate time to diagnose and develop a strategy. It also can refer to someone who jumps from one strategy to another at the slightest sign of resistance. Use a "rifle" approach to hit the bull's-eye with the optimal strategy.

We have now discussed the key elements in influencing employee behavior. Effectively using the principles contained in this section will increase your power to achieve your personal and work-related goals.

CRITICAL INCIDENT
EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Occurrence: A manager at the Site is known to be a master of influence. He flexibly applies all of the seven strategies of influence. He diagnoses how people are likely to respond to the various strategies, and then selects the one that will work best. This varies according to the person and the situation. The manager may use one strategy on a person today, but a different strategy when circumstances change. This approach was described as "personalized influence."

Impact: This manager is very effective in his organizational role. He gets what he wants more often than not. He very rarely has to appeal to higher authority or to use sanctions.

Lessons learned: (1) Taking time to diagnose before choosing an influence strategy is a good practice. (2) Use the various strategies of influence flexibly; don't over rely on a favorite approach. (3) Being an effective influencer will help you to succeed.

D. MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the key elements in motivating employees.
2. Identify practices that may de-motivate employees.
3. Given a scenario, evaluate the manager's effectiveness in motivating employees.

Motivating employees is one of the most valuable skills you can learn to enhance your supervisory effectiveness. In a 1990 survey, only 46 percent of WID supervisors and managers felt very confident in their ability to motivate employees. Motivation is a complex topic, but we will focus on principles of motivation that you can use and apply.

Work motivation is a set of energetic forces that originate within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration. In other words, motivation is an individual's desire to do something based upon a need. What you care about is your employees' desire to do a good job. You can have a big impact on the motivation level of your employees. Let's talk about do's and don'ts concerning motivation.

Key Elements in Motivating Employees

- Provide your employees with challenges

  Give them occasional "stretching" assignments. Delegate some of your meaningful work.

- Help your employees grow on the job

  Send them to job-relevant training of their choice. Training can be a big boost to motivation because it can increase an employee's feeling of competence.

- Try to promote from within (when possible)

  Let interested employees know what qualities, experience, and performance are necessary to qualify for promotion.

- Recognize employee achievements

  Commend their accomplishments. This may be the most important factor in motivating employees. Your employees will feel recognized if they believe that management (you and your supervisor) have a high personal regard for them.

- Make sure employees know where they stand (no surprises)

  They should not have to guess about how they are doing.

- Help employees to cultivate a definite sense of identity on the job

  Make them feel like a person - not a number.

- Back employees up when necessary

  Lend a hand to help them get what they need.

- Make employees feel like an important part of the team

  Let them make the decisions about issues that affect them. Allow employees to be "in on things".

- When employees do something wrong, let them know right away

  Don't "gunnysack" your concerns.

- Reward employee efforts

  Tell them how much their efforts matter. Commend employees who have done a good job.

- Be someone your employees can trust

  Employees need to feel confident that they can depend on you.

- Be firm but always fair

  Motivation levels in your department will be higher if employees see you as impartial, honest, and free from favoritism.

- Build rapport

  Strive for harmonious relations with your employees.

- Keep two-way communication flowing

  Set aside time at the beginning of meetings to hear about employee concerns. Inform employees about department goals, objectives, and problems.

- Build morale by letting your employees know that you truly care about them

  Call to check on them when they are out sick for more than one day. Actively listen when they talk to you. Remember: The whole person comes to work. Off-the-job concerns come to work with your employees every day. Contact Human Resources if you notice recurring problems and feel that a supervisory intervention is necessary.

- Base promotions and raises solely on merit and individual achievement
  Evaluate employees based on one criterion - their effectiveness on the job.

- Make certain that you distribute the work load equitably

  It is tempting to load down your most competent employees because they tend to accomplish more. Be careful of contributing to employee burnout.

- Promote team synergism

  Synergism is interaction that produces a total effect greater than the sum of the individual effect. Encourage your employees to work collectively; it can enhance the effectiveness of your work group.

- Set a good example by staying self-motivated

  Your positive thoughts - and actions based on those thoughts - will go a long way toward creating a motivational climate that will bring out the best in each of your employees.

- Understand individual employee styles

  Allow employees to do the job in a way that is comfortable for them - as long as they meet performance standards. Employees will work hard for supervisors and managers who encourage creativity and respect the individual.

- Ask employees for ideas about how to improve the work situation, and <u>use</u> the ideas

- Find out from employees what kinds of rewards motivate them

  It is easier to find out what people want than it is to change people to want what you have to offer. You will get what you want by helping employees to get what they want.

- Keep attention focused on employee goals

  Talk about goals often, and emphasize what each person is doing right. Greet progress toward goals with enthusiastic approval.

- Be aware that employees tend to live up your expectations

  Employees can read your expectations through your nonverbal behaviors. Expect the best, and you will increase your chances of getting it.

- Define precisely, in observable and measurable behaviors, what you desire from employees

  Setting specific, difficult, but achievable goals leads to higher motivation. Make certain that goals are attainable by employees. If a person feels that the expected level of performance is higher than he or she can reasonably achieve, the motivation to perform will be low.

- When practical, make occasional changes so that your employees don't become "stale"

  Job rotation is one method.

That's a pretty comprehensive list of key elements. Now let's cover some practices that may de-motivate employees. Common sense will tell you that these will consist of any violations of the key elements listed above. A few additional points need to be covered.

PRACTICES THAT MAY DE-MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES

- Assuming you know what motivates individual employees

  Don't fall into the trap of basing your decisions about employee motivation on erroneous information about what motivates employees. The sad truth is that supervisors and managers frequently are out of touch with what employees want from their jobs.

- Forgetting that not everyone is like you

  The following quotation from Robert Schrank brings home this point:

  > Engineers, managers, or behavioral scientists, with their compulsive, competitive preoccupation with "making it," tend to see this as a paradigm for all workers. But many workers are not interested in "making it" in a career of power and responsibility, or even in increasing their autonomy and creativity. Some blue-collar workers prefer to make bowling the center of their lives. That may be a greater demonstration of autonomy and creativity than building a better high-speed box.

- Attempting to mold employees to fit one management style

  You will lose creative talent this way. Learn to accept your employees as they are.

- Failing to empathize (putting yourself in the employee's shoes)

  Employees may assume that you don't care about their concerns if you don't take time to see things from their point of view. Empathizing does <u>not</u> mean sympathizing or giving advice. Employees can usually come up with solutions for their concerns if you listen and help them think through problems.

Have you heard the term esprit de corps? This is the common spirit existing in the members of a group and inspiring enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group. Wouldn't it be great to supervise a group with that level of motivation? By consciously applying the principles covered in this module, you can begin building esprit de corps within your employee group. Keeping your employees motivated, while not easy, is worth the effort. They will be more productive and more resilient when they encounter problems on the job. This will reflect back favorably on you.

CRITICAL INCIDENT
EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Occurrence: A WID employee was bored because she was in a job that did not challenge her capabilities. Her manager motivated her by:

- Giving "stretching" assignments
- Allowing the employee to make many decisions that affected her
- Sending the employee to beneficial training
- Encouraging the employee to apply for promotional job openings

Impact: This now highly motivated employee has been promoted to a position of increased responsibility. She produces high quality work and is a key employee in her department. She is no longer stale and almost never bored with her present job. She has gained self-confidence and now has set her sights on advancing into a management position someday.

Lessons learned: 1) Be supportive of your employees; they will remember and respond positively to your support. 2) Encourage employees to advance their knowledge. This benefits the employee and WID. 3) Give employees the opportunity to grow and stretch. Not everyone will respond, but you won't know until you give employees the opportunity.

E. COUNSELING EMPLOYEES

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the key elements in effective employee counseling.
2. Identify practices to avoid when counseling employees.
3. Given a scenario, evaluate the effectiveness of the manager's employee counseling.

As a supervisor or manager, you will be occasionally called upon to counsel employees. When you counsel employees, you are advising them on work-related matters. Employees with personal problems that are affecting their job should be referred to the Employee Assistance Program.

A counseling situation can arise when you detect a performance problem or when one of your employees comes to you with a work-related problem. It is usually best to adopt a problem solving approach when counseling employees. When using this approach, your primary goal is to help your employees solve their problems.

Key Elements in Effective Employee Counseling

- Prepare

  Choose an appropriate physical setting for the counseling session. It should be conducted in private, without interruptions, and with adequate time available.

- Create a comfortable atmosphere

  Make employees feel as relaxed and as at ease as possible.

- Identify the problem

  Before problem solving, you need a common definition of the problem. Describe the problem. The ideal is for your employee to recognize the problem, acknowledge it, and agree that correction is needed. Short of that, this step should aim to get the employee at least to understand clearly what you see as the problem. Do not assume you both understand the problem; explicitly discuss it.

- Discuss the cause

  You and the employee should attempt to identify and agree on the causes of the problem. You may already have ideas about the causes. It is just as likely that the employee will have ideas about what is causing the problem. The employee's view may disagree with yours. Active, open discussion of causes is important to action planning. You can often learn about impediments to performance that an employee is encountering.

- Agree on a plan

  You and the employee should jointly create a plan for correcting the causes of the problem. It is important for you to problem solve with the employee. Using creative thinking techniques and setting goals may prove helpful. Try to get your employee to invest in the solution to the problem and to feel a sense of ownership in the plan. Be ready and willing to invest time and energy into solving the problem. Your employee may need your assistance and support.

- Implement the plan

  Provide feedback as the employee works to solve the problem. Pass on information that will help your employee succeed.

- Follow-up

  Is the performance problem solved? If all goes well, the problem is solved and your counseling efforts have paid off. If the problem is not solved, you must review your strategy and reassess the most appropriate way to solve the problem. If disciplinary action is needed, contact Employee Relations. Discipline is covered in MAS-112, Administrative Requirements.

Practices to Avoid When Counseling Employees

- Using an emotional or critical counseling approach

  This will cause the employee to take a defensive position in the counseling discussion. Stick with a nonpunishing approach.

- Beating around the bush

  Be direct; get to the point.

- Not attempting to reach agreement with the employee on the causes of poor performance

  Lack of agreement can only hamper the problem solving process.

- Failing to create a joint plan for attacking the causes of the problem

  Avoid "telling and selling", pressing the employee into following a course of action, or dumping the problem in the employee's lap.

- Talking too much

  Be an active listener and allow the employee to do <u>at least</u> half the talking.

- Being afraid of silence

  It may take some time for employees to think through problems before responding. Don't interrupt an employee's chain of thought by talking.

- Failing to act naturally

  You should act as you normally do with the employee. Formal or mechanical behavior will make communication more difficult.

- Not showing empathy

  It is helpful if you can identify with the employee and place yourself in their position. This contributes to an atmosphere of understanding.

- Forgetting to encourage the employee as they make progress in improving performance

  Remember to reinforce desirable behaviors.

- Failing to maintain confidentiality

  It is a good practice to keep things discussed in counseling sessions to yourself.

Use the principles covered in this section to effectively counsel your employees. In doing so, you will be able to eliminate many performance problems while maintaining employee self-esteem and cooperation.

CRITICAL INCIDENT
INEFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Occurrence: A WID employee moved to a new job and began having a performance problem. The employee's manager noticed the problem but never held a problem solving session with the employee. Instead, the manager complained to others and came up with peculiar and unlikely possible causes for the performance problem. When he did speak to the employee about the unacceptable work, the manager gave vague, useless feedback such as "we've got problems here; we've got to improve." or "This procedure isn't right."

Impact: The employee left these work discussions confused and unsure about what to do. Time that could have been spent solving the performance problem was wasted. The employee continued to generate subpar work. The manager and employee lost respect for one another as a result of the manager's ineffective attempts at counseling.

Lessons learned: (1) Don't beat around the bush. Tell employees exactly what you perceive the problem to be. Be direct and specific when describing performance problems. Employees can't work to solve problems they don't know about. (2) Agree on a plan. Discussing the problem isn't enough. Get your employee's input to identify what each of you will do to attack the causes of the poor performance.

F. ADDRESSING EMPLOYEE CONCERNS

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the key elements in addressing employee concerns.
2. Identify practices to avoid in addressing employee concerns.
3. Given a scenario, evaluate the manager's effectiveness at addressing employee concerns.

To address employee concerns, you have to be aware of concerns. This requires upward communication. Upward communication exists when information flows from your employees to you.

Your employees will share their concerns with you if (1) you listen and (2) you create a climate of trust. If you are inattentive or defensive while listening to employees, employees probably won't bother to talk to you next time they have concerns. When trust exists, your employees are more likely to discuss ideas and feelings freely, and you are more likely to accurately interpret what your employees mean. The importance of creating and maintaining a climate of trust cannot be overemphasized.

Key Elements in Addressing Employee Concerns

- Encourage your employees to communicate with you

  Thank employees for sharing complaints, rumors, and other information with you.

- Be available and visible

  The most effective method of upward communication is daily face-to-face contacts and conversations between you and your employees.

- Treat information you receive with confidentiality

  This is the key to creating a climate of trust.

- Communicate honestly and sincerely with your employees

- Stay receptive to employee concerns regardless of how things are going

  You must keep a continuous flow of upward communication, in good and bad times.

- Expect differences in interpretations and perceptions of events

  An employee's position in the organization will often cause him or her to see things differently than you do. Differences in values and priorities lead to differences in judgments and conclusions. Listen with the intent of understanding what your employees mean.

- Listen objectively

  Reactions that detract from the seriousness of information and irritating listening habits show that upward communication is not really desired. Hear your employees out and put them at ease. This will demonstrate your receptive intent and your willingness to hear contrary opinions, implied criticism, and alternative points of view.

- Be tactful

  Employees may start to tell you about a concern only to realize halfway through that he or she does not have a real issue. Help the employee to "save face". You never want an employee to leave humiliated or embarrassed.

- Get the facts

  You want the story and you want it straight. Ask questions to clear up any inconsistencies. Take notes so that you can remember the details.

- Investigate carefully

  You need to know who, what, when, where, and why. Speak with everyone who may have been a witness or have relevant information. This will help to piece together the complete picture.

- Act with deliberation

  You need time to get all the facts.

- Take action to respond to problems

  Active listening may get new ideas into the open, but a failure to take action only creates resentment and undermines upward communication. When changes in policies should be made, just listening without adjustments denies the idea of effective upward communication. If action cannot be taken, inform your employees and give reasons why changes cannot be made. Employees expect you to answer their questions. If you do not know the answer to a question, ask someone who does and get back to the employee.

- Consider the consequences of your decision

  Make certain you know what the effect of your response will be, not only on the individual but also on the group. Your decision may set a precedent. Use all methods at your disposal to analyze your solution. Use Human Resources as a sounding board to assist you.

- Admit mistakes

  You are human. If events prove you wrong, admit your error.

- Sell decisions

  Try to make potentially unpopular decisions easier to swallow. This can be hard at times, but a positive outlook on a situation makes work more pleasant. Remember: <u>You set the example for your employees</u>.

Practices to Avoid in Addressing Employee Concerns

- Don't commiserate with employees

  It is usually a mistake to express sympathy or sorrow for your employees. This does nothing to improve their situation or morale. Saying things like "Yea, the Company really screwed you on this one" only makes things worse.

- Don't beat around the bush when communicating with employees; be direct

- Don't cut corners when investigating a concern

  Relying on hearsay or making snap judgments almost always leads to a poor decision.

- Don't forget to get back to employees about concerns

  If your investigation or decision will take time, give your employees a progress report. If they see that you are working on their concern, they will be more reasonable.

- Don't be part of the rumor mill

  When employees come to you with rumors or grapevine information, don't speculate. Thank them for the information but ask them not to amplify the rumor. Emphasize that grapevine information is usually somewhat incomplete, lending itself to misinterpretation even when the details are accurate.

CRITICAL INCIDENT
INEFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Occurrence: A pay issue arose because a group of employees were comparing salaries. This turned into a problem because some employees felt that they were paid inequitably in comparison to another group. The supervisor of this group of employees made matters worse by commiserating with the employees. He agreed with the employees, stating that some of them were "getting screwed."

Impact: By condoning and participating in Company-bashing and negativism, the supervisor helped foster an "us versus them" attitude. This decreased motivation to perform and Company loyalty among this work group.

Lessons learned: (1) Listen objectively to employee concerns. Stay empathetic rather than sympathetic. (2) Investigate the concern before taking a stand. (3) Get back to employees with a solid explanation or action plan. (4) Rise above and help to quell negativism. Sell the Company position whenever possible.

G. CONDUCTING PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the key steps in conducting effective performance appraisals.
2. Identify practices to avoid in conducting performance appraisals.
3. Given a scenario, evaluate the manager's effectiveness in conducting a performance appraisal.

Performance appraisal is the systematic description of individual job-relevant strengths and weaknesses. WEC believes employees should have a regular performance appraisal to encourage them to consistently put forth their best efforts to achieve the goals of the organization. Your employees deserve the opportunity to meet with you and learn exactly how their performance compares to your expectations and to discuss their career aspirations. This section will provide you with do's and don't's so that you can effectively manage this process.

Key Steps in Conducting Effective Performance Appraisals

- Ensure that all your exempt employees have objectives that:

  Begin with an action verb

  Specify the end result

  Indicate a target date for a specific time period

  Specify maximum cost factors (if possible)

  Are realistic and attainable

  Are easily understood

  Are consistent with your objectives

  Specify only the what, when, and how much and avoid the how and why

- Provide feedback on job performance regularly to all your employees

  Coaching should be a day-to-day activity. This is important because feedback has maximum impact when it is given as close as possible to the action. When employees behave effectively, tell them immediately; if they behave ineffectively, also tell them immediately. Do not file or "gunnysack" these incidents to discuss later. In the 1991 Communications Survey, WID employees were asked the following question: "How would you rate the day-to-day feedback you receive on how well you are doing your job?" Only 41 percent of our employees gave a favorable response to this question. You can help improve our (WID's) performance in this category if you choose to.

- Conduct objective review meetings with your exempt employees quarterly

- Judge your own performance first before judging others

  This is helpful for the following reasons:

  Knowing oneself makes it easier to see others accurately.

  One's own characteristics affect the characteristics one is likely to see in others.

  The person who accepts himself or herself is more likely to be able to see favorable aspects of other people.

  Accuracy in perceiving others is not a single skill.

- Rate your employees fairly and consistently

  Base as much of the appraisal as possible on objective standards and goals. Judge performance, not personality. Make a conscious effort to keep out biases and focus on job-related behavior.

  Rate your employees on only one performance factor at a time. This will help you avoid letting one favorable or unfavorable trait unduly influence your overall rating (the halo effect).

  Check your employee appraisals to see if you have a variety of ratings for each performance factor. Not everybody should have the same rating. Realistically, people are not that similar.

When evaluating an employee's performance, you can rate with confidence if you can support your rating with documented incidents. For each performance factor being evaluated, list specific instances that illustrate the point. To be certain you do not forget critical examples of an employee's behavior, it is a good practice to make notes of critical incidents, good and bad, when they happen.

- Encourage subordinate preparation

  The more time your employees spend preparing for the appraisal session, the more likely they are to be 1) satisfied with the appraisal process, 2) motivated to improve their performance, and 3) able to improve their performance. Ask your employees to come prepared to discuss topics such as:

  What would make the job more rewarding?

  Are there any problems on the job you can help with?

  What are the employee's goals in the organization?

  Does the employee have any suggestions for departmental improvement?

- Plan the appraisal session

  Arrange to conduct the session where you can have uninterrupted privacy. Estimate how much time you and the employees will need and make sure that both of your calendars are clear for the required time block. Think about what you are going to say. Is it constructive and helpful?

7. Warm up and encourage participation. Greet the employee in a friendly manner and put them at ease. The more your employee feels he or she participated in the session by presenting his or her ideas and feelings the more likely they are to feel that (1) you were helpful and constructive, (2) some current job problems were cleared up, and (3) future goals were set.

8. Be candid and specific, offering clear feedback to your employee concerning past actions. This is essential so that they will feel that your appraisal was fair and accurate.

9. Be an active listener. You've seen two other people in a heated argument. They are so intent on making their own points that they have little idea what the other person is saying. That is the opposite of active listening, where the object is to empathize (to stand in the other person's shoes and try to see things from their point of view). Here is an example:

> During an appraisal session, an employee says: " I don't want to work with Sally anymore. She's lazy and she gossips about the rest of us. She thinks she is above this kind of work and too good to work with the rest of us and I'm sick of being around her." The supervisor replies: "Sally's attitude makes the work unpleasant for you."

By reflecting what the woman said, the supervisor is encouraging the employee to confront her feelings and is also letting her know that she understands them. Active listeners are attentive to verbal and nonverbal cues, and they listen to what the other person is saying without argument or criticism.

10. Remember that your employee has a great deal of personal pride at stake during the appraisal session. Show a genuine interest in the employee as a person, regardless of his or her level of performance. Treat each of your employees with the same amount of dignity and respect that you yourself expect.

11. Present weak points as "areas for development". Emphasize that we all have areas where we could improve.

12. End the session on a positive note. Summarize what you need from the employee and what you will do to help. Your employee will pursue their job with greater confidence and enthusiasm if they know they have your support.

PRACTICES TO AVOID IN CONDUCTING PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

1. Do not make any promises about raises or promotions. Circumstances may change, making it impossible for you to fulfill the promise. The result: A seriously de-motivated employee. Stay focused on the subject of the session: Appraising performance.

2. Never discuss performance with an angry employee. Allow the employee to vent their feelings and reschedule the session if necessary.

3. Avoid getting angry yourself. Stay problem-centered when attacked. Here's how:

   Respond non-verbally until the other person finishes what they have to say.

   Reflect the other person's concerns.

   Focus on areas of agreement.

   Ask for specifics of legitimate problems or criticisms.

   Use I-statements to set limits without fighting or giving in. Example: "I am willing to...".

4. Avoid comparing the employee to other employees. Instead, point out ways the employee could do better.

5. Don't focus on the employee's mistakes; focus on improvement in the future.

6. Don't talk negatively to an employee. Avoid using words that belittle a person or words that are associated with failure such as " guilty", "faults", "mistakes", etcetera.

7. Avoid asking stressful questions with a grilling connotation that put the employee under tension. An example is "Why didn't you...".

CRITICAL INCIDENT
INEFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Occurrence: A supervisor was displeased with the performance of one of his employees. The supervisor complained to others, but never spoke to the employee about the performance problems. During the employee's next performance appraisal session, the supervisor "dropped a bomb" on the employee. He said that he had been very unhappy with the employee's performance and that he was lowering the employee's performance rating.

Impact: The employee was extremely upset about the unpleasant surprise. This incident permanently damaged the working relationship between this employee and supervisor. Furthermore, the employee was not motivated to improve his performance.

Lessons learned: (1) Give employees ongoing feedback. There should be no surprises during the appraisal session. (2) When an employee is having performance problems, document them. (3) Consult with Human Resources for advice on how to handle problem performers.

References: Applied Psychology in Personnel Management by W. Cascio, 1982.
Assessing Employee Performance by D. Engler, 1986.
Fayetteville Supervisor's Manual, Westinghouse, 1982.
Westinghouse Communications Survey, 1991.

H. INTERVIEWING

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the steps involved in conducting an effective job interview.

2. Identify practices to avoid when conducting a job interview.

3. Given a job interview scenario, evaluate the effectiveness of the manager's interview techniques.

As a supervisor or manager, interviewing job applicants is an important part of your job. Careful attention to this phase of the employment process will result in smoother, more effective interviews. This will help you gather the information you need to make a good selection decision.

To conduct an effective interview, follow these steps:

1. Make sure at least two persons participate in the interview process. The hiring supervisor and Human Resources are required to participate.

2. Prepare for interviews:

   Review the applicant's application and resume. Why? This will help you identify questions to ask during the interview.

   Allow sufficient time for the interview. Block out plenty of time so that you will not have to rush through the interview process. A minimum of 45 minutes should normally be set aside.

Plan an appropriate environment. Here are some guidelines to consider:

Ensure privacy. The interview should not be overheard by others.

Ensure a minimum number of distractions. These would include your phone ringing, people walking into your office, and mental distraction as you think about all the work you have to do.

Make certain that the applicant will be comfortable. Do whatever you can to create an easeful environment.

Consider the seating arrangements. Plan where you want everyone to sit.

Be clear about your objectives. Make sure you know what type of person will succeed in the job you are trying to fill.

Plan your basic questions. Make sure you have questions to gather information about the job-relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities of the applicants. Review legal issues and which types of questions to avoid (covered later in this section). Consider different types of questions. Open-ended questions are usually the most effective, yielding the most information. Hypothetical questions also can be very productive.

Consider the role of perception. Be aware of the five ways in which we formulate our perceptions and ideas about people.

1. First impressions. Try not to form an impression until after you have conducted the interview. You cannot determine job suitability by sizing someone up in a split second based on his or her appearance.

2. Information from others. Information from others can be helpful, but do not allow yourself to be unduly influenced by it. Assess the applicant on his or her merits.

3. Single statements. An applicant's answer to one of your questions may rub you the wrong way. Be aware of your response to that single disagreeable statement.

   Maintain your objectivity; do not reject an applicant unless you have a valid reason.

4. Body language. Each of us has our own pattern of nonverbal expression. Be careful not to draw conclusions based on an applicant's nonverbal messages too early in the interview process. Remember: An applicant's pattern of nonverbal expression is attributable to a combination of cultural and environmental factors.

5. Ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism means that we use our values, standards, and beliefs to judge or evaluate others. This directly opposes objectivity, which is an interviewer's number one obligation. Measure applicants against job-related standards; avoid stereotypical thinking.

Establish the format. Make certain that you develop a system that encompasses all the important ingredients of an interview. Be sure that it reflects your style and personality.

3. Conduct the interview.

Greet applicants promptly. Minimize the amount of time applicants spend waiting before and between interviews.

Establish rapport. Put applicants at ease before beginning the interview. This will result in a greater exchange of information. Use "ice-breakers" (friendly small talk that has no real bearing on the job). Inform the applicant if you will be taking notes during the interview.

Begin questioning applicants after about two minutes of ice-breaking. Make sure you do not start with a difficult first question. A well-worded, open-ended question can provide several additional categories for you to explore.

Seek specific examples or "stories" regarding the candidate's accomplishments and mistakes. Ask probing, clarifying questions until you fully understand the applicant's contribution or role in the story.

If you take notes during the interview, record only job-related information. Jot down key words and phrases; you can expand on these after the applicant leaves.

Meet equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws. Questions you ask should be legal and job-related.

Actively listen. Here's how:

1. Talk less, listen more. You should spend about 70 percent of your time listening to the applicant.

2. Summarize periodically. This will help to ensure that you understand what the applicant is trying to say.

3. Filter out distractions. Concentrate closely on what the applicant says. If you don't you are likely to miss important information that could influence your hiring decision.

Practice positive body language. Employ those gestures and movements that are likely to be interpreted in an encouraging way. Strive for consistency between verbal statements and nonverbal expressions. Remember: Applicants will be watching you closely and trying to read your body language.

Encourage applicants to talk. Repetition, summarization, encouraging phrases, and silence may all be used to encourage applicants to talk.

Adjust your approach when dealing with problem applicants. Shy, nervous, aggressive, highly emotional, very talkative, or dominant applicants require some variation from your regular interviewing approach. Be careful not to become too emotionally involved in these instances - practice empathy, not sympathy. Also be careful not to lose control of the interview.

Provide the applicant with an opportunity to ask questions. Give the interviewee a realistic job preview; discuss both the negative and pleasant aspects associated with the job. If you oversell the positive aspects, the applicant will develop unrealistically inflated expectations. Later, when these expectations are not met, your newly hired employee will be dissatisfied. This can result in many undesirable consequences, including a decision to quit the job.

Before the applicant leaves, they should be told what the next step will be and when they can expect to hear about the hiring decision.

4. Fill out an Interviewee Evaluation Form (optional).

The Interviewee Evaluation Form is available from Human Resources. If you choose to fill out the form , avoid subjective language. It can bias other interviewers and may come back to "haunt" you if read by someone else. Examples of subjective language include:

"Too young" "Has a bad attitude"
"Pushy" "Ideal candidate"

Avoid recording opinions. Opinion statements do not refer to anything factual. If anyone other than the original interviewer were to read them, they would not be able to determine the applicant's job-suitability. Examples include:

"I feel Ms. Jenkins would make an excellent supervisor."

"I believe Mr. Curtis is the perfect candidate for this job."

"I think Mr. Turner will make a good mechanic."

Refer to job-related facts. Using a job description as a guide will help you stay on track.

Be descriptive. Record facts that will help you to differentiate applicants from one another several weeks after interviewing them.

PRACTICES TO AVOID WHEN CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

1. Excessive talking, which limits the amount of job-related information you will obtain from applicants.

2. Inconsistency in questioning (not asking all applicants for a particular job the same basic questions). This results in gathering different types of information from each applicant.

3. Overconfidence and a sense of infallibility in your evaluation ability. This will encourage hasty decisions.

4. Decision style errors in which you have a tendency to rate many applicants the same.

5. Failing to put the interviewee at ease during the interview. This will make it very difficult for you to gather spontaneous or follow-up information. If you plan to take notes, inform the applicant.

6. Allowing one or two either good or bad characteristics to influence your evaluations of all other characteristics.

7. Stereotyping an applicant and allowing personal bias to influence your evaluation.

8. Being unduly influenced by the nonverbal behavior of the applicant.

9. Asking questions that are either unrelated or only slightly related to performance on the job.

10. Interrupting an applicant (unless they are saying something irrelevant).

11. Agreeing or disagreeing. Instead, express interest and understanding.

12. Using words or acronyms that an applicant is unlikely to understand.

13. Reading the application or resume back to an applicant.

14. Comparisons with the incumbent, previous employees, yourself, or other candidates.

15. Talking down to an applicant.

16. Talking about yourself.

17. Allowing potential peers or coworkers of interviewees to see applicant salary information.

PRACTICES TO AVOID WHEN CONDUCTING A JOB INTERVIEW (Continued)

18. Letting note-taking interfere with listening. Note-taking is O.K., as long as you keep your notes job-related and brief. Write down key words or phrases at the same time that you are actively listening to what the applicant is saying.

19. Telling an applicant that they are "over" or "under" qualified. This can frustrate applicants and does not give them any useful information.

20. Asking trick questions that may embarrass. If you see that the applicant has given you conflicting information, you should explore this, but do so discreetly. Your job is finding out about applicants, not letting them know they have been "caught".

21. Being impatient. Treat applicants with respect, even if you are in a hurry. Glancing at your watch can "kill" an interview.

22. Offering applicants jobs or promising salaries during interviews.

23. "Mass interviewing" (having an applicant interview with too many people). Three or four interviewers is usually enough.

24. Asking questions such as the following is illegal per case law:

Address

"Isn't that address in a predominantly black section of town?"

Age

"How old are you?"

Arrest or Conviction Record

"Have you ever been charged with a crime?"

Citizenship

"Are you a native-born citizen of the United States, or are you naturalized?"

Color or Race

"Is your ancestry Chinese, Japanese, or Vietnamese?"

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS (Continued)

Educational Background

"Did you go to a Catholic high school?"

Extracurricular Activities

"Are you a member of a fraternity?"

Friends and Associates

"Would you consider yourself a member of the Moral Majority?"

Handicaps or Disabilities

"Have you ever had a nervous breakdown?"

Health

"Do you have any recurring health problems?"

Housing Preference

"Do you want to live in an all-white neighborhood?"

Marital Status

"Are you married?"

Military Service Background

"Have you ever served as a mercenary for another country?"

Name

"Aren't most people named 'Mohommed' members of a Muslim sect?"

Photograph

"Do you have a recent photograph for our interview records?"

Physical Characteristics

"How tall are you?"

References

"Will you have a recommendation sent to us from someone who knows your family background and history?"

Relatives and Family

"Do you have any family members in the Carlsbad area?"

Religion

"Is there any religious reason why you could not work on Saturday?"

Sex

"As a man, how would you react to working for a female supervisor?"

You have now reached the conclusion of this section. Review this information before conducting interviews. By doing so, you will become a more effective interviewer. You also will help to prevent legal problems that can arise from poorly handled interviews.

CRITICAL INCIDENT
INEFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Occurrence: A manager interviewed an applicant and was impressed. Human Resources had not interviewed the applicant or conducted a background check. Failing to follow proper hiring practices, the manager offered the applicant a job during the interview. The manager further aggravated the situation by telling the applicant to call Human Resources and find out what the starting salary would be. This caught the Human Resources personnel totally by surprise.

Impact: The Company looked disorganized during the uproar that followed the applicant's telephone call to Human Resources. A lot of work is normally required before a job offer goes out. By this time, it was too late not to hire the applicant.

Lessons learned: (1) Properly follow hiring procedures. If you are unsure about Company hiring policy, call Human Resources. (2) Never make an offer to an applicant until all pre-offer procedural steps have been completed. Human Resources may uncover information which prevents hiring a seemingly hirable applicant.

References: Recruiting, Interviewing, Selecting, and Orienting New Employees by D. Arthur, 1986.
Human Resource Selection by R. Gatewood and H. Feild, 1987.
Legal Aspects of the Employment Interview by B. Gilbreath, 1985
Personnel by W. Glueck, 1982.

I. DIRECTING EMPLOYEES

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the steps involved in effectively directing employee activities.
2. Identify practices to avoid concerning directing employees.
3. Given an employee-manager scenario, evaluate the manager's effectiveness in directing employees.

When you direct, you are carrying out the organizing, energizing, and supervising of your employees. Directing is a very efficient leadership style to use when: (1) Time is short, and (2) employee experience is low.

STEPS INVOLVED IN EFFECTIVELY DIRECTING EMPLOYEE ACTIVITIES

1. Give specific instructions.

Know what you want. Unless you know what you want, you cannot instruct another. Define the task in your own mind. Think it through step by step to the result you want. Or begin with the result and figure out how to get there.

Recognize feelings. Take a minute to identify your true feelings about the task. This will help you stay task-centered if the instructions pertain to a controversial or emotional issue. You also need to consider how the employee is likely to feel about the task. This will help prevent feelings from reducing the employee's attention and ability to receive your instructions.

Find out how much the employee already knows. This will help you gear your instructions to match the employee's knowledge. Don't waste your time by giving

experienced employees instructions they do not need. Sometimes employees know less than you thought. In such cases you will need to simplify your instructions.

1. Give specific instructions (continued):

   Neither demand nor apologize. Speak in a kind, matter-of-fact manner. Your role requires giving directions and instructions, not demanding.

   Tell the employee exactly what you want done, how to do it, and when you need it completed. Begin with a statement of the results you expect and why the task is important. Then explain how to do the task. When possible, demonstrate. Describe the sort of help or support that will be available.

   Check to ensure that the employee understands your instructions. One way to do this is to ask the employee to repeat your instructions back to you in their own words. Asking for questions is another way.

2. Closely supervise the work.

   Decide when and how to monitor progress.

   Check the employee's progress on a regular basis.

   Inspect the employee's work and redirect if necessary.

3. Take responsibility for most of the decisions.

   Encourage employees to come to you when they reach decision points.

   Make the decisions yourself or guide the employee toward the proper decisions.

PRACTICES TO AVOID WHEN DIRECTING EMPLOYEES

1. Giving unclear, incomplete, or nonspecific instructions.
2. Asking questions like "Would you mind doing this project for me?" or "Would you like to ...?" This can sound apologetic or put employees on guard. It's your job to assign work. Don't apologize.
3. Failing to ensure that employees fully understand your instructions.
4. Not checking employees' progress frequently enough.

5. Not inspecting employees' work carefully enough to detect errors.

6. Failing to stay involved in making decisions.

PRACTICES TO AVOID WHEN DIRECTING EMPLOYEES (Continued)

7. Overusing the directing style. This style has major drawbacks:

   You (the supervisor or manager) create a great deal of pressure for yourself.

   The employee you are directing may feel left out and unimportant.

   Experienced employees that don't need direction often resent a directing style.

To conclude, directing is a leadership style that can be useful to you. Consider using it when an employee's motivation or skill level is low and time is scarce. Another leadership style is appropriate when an employee is competent or when you have time for an inexperienced employee to learn.

CRITICAL INCIDENT
INEFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Occurrence: A group of employees in WID were working on an expensive piece of equipment. This workgroup had done the same type of work often. Top Site management was interested in this equipment and was watching the work. The manager of the workgroup began directing his employees, telling them how to proceed. Under similar past circumstances, the manager did not find it necessary to direct the employees. The employees noticed the difference in the manager's style of leadership.

Impact: The manager's inconsistent style insulted the employees.
They attributed the manager's directing style in this instance to the presence of upper management. They did not need his direction and they resented it.

Lessons learned: (1) Don't use a directing style when it is not needed. This can have a detrimental effect on employee morale. (2) Be aware of and consistent in your behavior. Inconsistent behavior without a justifiable reason will leave an unfavorable impression on your employees. (3) Show off your employees and let them "shine". When your employees are well-trained and do well, it makes you look good. You don't gain anything by making it look like they couldn't "make it" without you.

References: Directing by N. Hill, McGraw Hill Training Systems, 1986.

How to Give Instructions, Practical Supervision, January 1, 1985.

J. MANAGING EXEMPT AND NON-EXEMPT PERSONNEL

Enabling Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the trainee will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the key elements involved in managing exempt and non-exempt personnel.
2. Identify practices to avoid in managing exempt and non-exempt personnel.
3. Given an employee-manager scenario, evaluate the effectiveness of the manager's management of exempt and non-exempt personnel.

You have probably heard the terms "exempt" and "non-exempt" used in reference to employees. These terms came into use because of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). "Exempt" means that FLSA regulations do not apply to that position (job) for overtime purposes. "Nonexempt" means that FLSA regulations do apply to that position for overtime purposes. Employees in nonexempt jobs must be paid time and a half for hours worked in excess of 40 in a workweek. Overtime pay is not required for employees in exempt jobs.

The following groups of employees are classified as exempt by the FLSA: (1) executives, (2) administrative employees, (3) professional employees, and (4) outside salespersons. Strict criteria must be met in order for jobs to be considered exempt. For example, to be classified as an exempt professional, an employee must:

Do work requiring knowledge generally acquired by prolonged, specialized study, or engage in original and creative activity in a recognized artistic field.

Consistently exercise discretion or judgment.

Do work that is primarily intellectual and nonroutine.

Devote at least 80 percent of their work hours to such activities.

Determining whether or not a position is exempt can be complex. This is handled by the Human Resources Department.

Nonexempt employees sometimes feel like they are on the "low end of the totem pole." They perceive a large gap between exempt and non-exempt status. This perception has a divisive effect. Both groups of employees, exempt and nonexempt, are essential to the success of WIPP. Neither group should be made to feel more or less important than the other. Deemphasize distinctions and promote unity between exempts and nonexempts. Treat all employees as "professionals." This will enhance cooperation and teamwork among your employees.

PRACTICES TO AVOID IN MANAGING EXEMPT AND NON-EXEMPT EMPLOYEES

1. Using the term "professional" synonymously with the term "exempt." They do not mean the same thing. Using the term "professional" when you mean "exempt" has a negative effect on nonexempt employees. You may inadvertently make them feel unprofessional.

2. Making exempt employees or nonexempt employees feel more or less important than the other. It is a mistake to emphasize distinctions.

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"Counselling the Public Employee" by C. Little, Supervisory Management, June 1981.

Organizational Communication by R. Pace and D. Faules, 1989

Z. PRACTICE TEST

1. Employees in nonexempt positions

   a. are not governed by FLSA regulations.
   b. are normally executives, administrators, or salespersons.
   c. do work that is primarily intellectual and nonroutine.
   d. must be paid time and a half for hours worked in excess of 40 in a workweek.

   (J.1)

2. A manager has determined that a directing style is appropriate since time is short and employee experience is low. Which of the following would be a GOOD practice for the manager to follow when giving instructions?

   a. Apologizing that time is so short
   b. Finding out how much the employee already knows
   c. Making sure that instructions are nonspecific

   (I.1)

3. You are preparing to conduct a job interview. Which of the following practices should you AVOID?

   a. Using open-ended questions
   b. Allowing the applicant to do more than half the talking
   c. Using interview questions that are job-related
   d. Having the applicant interview with everyone in your department

   (H.2)

4. During a performance appraisal session, your employee becomes angry. Which of the following actions would be a GOOD response?

   a. Respond non-verbally until the other person finishes what they have to say
   b. Respond verbally before the employee says something they will regret
   c. Immediately dismiss the employee from the performance appraisal session and tell the employee to come back when he/she has calmed down
   d. Calm the employee down by stating that the appraisal won't affect the employee's next pay increase

   (G.1)

5. A manager is confronted by an employee with a question about a concern. The manager finds out the answer, but knows that the answer is going to be very unpopular with employees. The manager should

   a. pass the blame to another department.
   b. not answer the question until it is asked again.
   c. get back to the employee with an answer, even though employees may not like the answer.
   d. "massage" the answer to more closely fit what employees want to hear.

   (F.1)

6. A supervisor noticed that a normally competent employee was having performance problems. She decided it was time to counsel the employee. The supervisor thought about and diagnosed the problems and came up with a plan. The supervisor then asked the employee to implement the plan. Was this a GOOD practice? WHY?

   a. YES - This helped the supervisor avoid disagreements about the causes of the problems
   b. YES - Now the supervisor won't have to follow-up to see if the performance problem is solved
   c. NO - The supervisor forgot to formally discipline the employee
   d. NO - The supervisor forgot to involve the employee in identifying the causes of the problem

   (E.3)

7. A supervisor was transferred to a new department where employees seemed to have low motivation (little desire to do a good job). Which of the following would be a GOOD practice to increase motivation?

   a. Telling employees to "shape up or ship out"
   b. Asking employees for ideas about how to improve the work situation
   c. Attempting to mold employees to fit one's preferred management style
   d. Giving the employees friendly advice on why it is important to be motivated

   (D.1)

8. A manager exclusively uses the "bargaining" strategy to influence behavior. Is this a GOOD practice? WHY?

   a. YES - It is best to consistently rely on one strategy that one is comfortable with
   b. YES - Bargaining is the most effective strategy
   c. NO - The manager's employees may observe and learn to be effective influencers
   d. NO - It is best to vary one's strategy to fit the circumstances

   (C.1)

9. A supervisor noticed that one of his best performers was bending the rules to get things done quicker. Time was saved and there was little likelihood of getting caught. The supervisor told the employee to continue but said "I don't want to hear about how you're getting it done so fast". Was this a GOOD practice? WHY?

   a. YES - A lot of time was saved
   b. YES - The supervisor was not knowingly violating regulations
   c. NO - The supervisor was "winking" at inappropriate behavior
   d. NO - The supervisor should have instructed other employees to bend the rules

   (B.3)

10. A nonexempt employee asked his supervisor a question about Company policy. The supervisor stated, "When you eventually move into the professional ranks, that policy will no longer apply to you." Was that statement a GOOD practice? WHY?

    a. YES - The supervisor was showing that the employee had upward mobility
    b. YES - The supervisor was correctly using the term "professional" synonymously with the term "exempt"
    c. NO - The supervisor forgot to mention that, overall, it is a lot better to be an exempt employee
    d. NO - The incorrect way the supervisor used the term "professional" can have a negative impact

    (J.3)

ANSWERS AND FEEDBACK FOR PRACTICE TEST

1. d. must be paid time and a half for hours worked in excess of 40 in a workweek.

2. b. Finding out how much the employee already knows

3. d. Having the applicant interview with everyone in your department

4. a. Respond non-verbally until the other person finishes what they have to say

5. c. get back to the employee with an answer, even though employees may not like the answer.

6. d. NO - The supervisor forgot to involve the employee in identifying the causes of the problem

7. b. Asking employees for ideas about how to improve the work situation

8. d. NO - It is best to vary your strategy to fit the circumstances

9. c. NO - The supervisor was "winking" at inappropriate behavior

10. d. NO - The incorrect way the supervisor used the term "professional" can have a negative impact

If you scored 80% or higher on the practice test, you are ready to take the module examination; please see the HRD Training Coordinator.

If you scored less than 80% on the practice test, please re-read the module and take the practice test again. If you still have questions, contact the HRD Training Coordinator.